DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 284 FL 004 594

AUTHOR	Kimizuka, Sumako
TITLE	Preparing "Learning Activity Packets" for Individualized Instruction: "Student Contracts" Approach.
PUB DATE	17 Mar 73
NOTE	6p.; Paper presented at a meeting of the Modern and Classical Language Association of Southern California, March 17, 1973
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Development; Educational Objectives; *Individualized Instruction; Japanese; *Language Instruction; Learning Activities; *Modern Languages; *Performance Contracts; Performance Specifications; Secondary School Students; *Second Language Learning; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with individualizing instruction for advanced students in secondary school language programs. Learning Activity Packets are prescribed as the ideal means of individualizing instruction in such programs. Five aspects of this method of instruction are examined: (1) the nature of individualized instruction, (2) the value of individualized instruction, including student contracts, (3) a description of individualized instruction in a representative high school language Program, (4) developing Learning Activity Packets, and (5) an outline of a sample Learning Activity Packet based on "LAP--Unit One: Modern Impersonal Style of Written Japanese." (RL)

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PREPARING "LEARNING ACTIVITY PACKETS" FOR INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION -- "STUDENT CONTRACTS" APPROACH

Sumako Kimizuka, University of Southern California

The structure of education in the modern world is designed for instructing groups, not individuals. Yet, we are all aware that only individuals learn. The problem, then, is to organize the instruction of groups so that individuals may learn at their individual rates, according to their individual styles, and to meet their individual needs. Foreign language learning should be a meaningful and practical experience for individual students.[1] The above statement is a guiding concept for the Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools, published by the California State Department of Education in 1972.

It has been my privilege to co-author the Framework, and to assist in implementing the concepts of the Framework in public school language instruction. This paper is presented as a report of "Individualized Instruction in Action in a California Public School." Although the model presented in this paper is a Japanese language program at high school level, it is believed that the concept should be applicable to the language instruction of all levels.

In the beginning level of foreign language instruction, the learner has little opportunity to determine the content or form of

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1. Calif. State Dept. of Education, Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools, Sacramento, 1972, p. 71

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his study. Therefore, he chooses a specified sequence, and proceeds along the same track toward accomplishment of the same goals as other students in that course. Not until the learner has achieved a relatively high level of proficiency is he able to select topics and procedures for study. This is possible when he has less need to focus on language as an end in itself -- when he may use language more as a means for accomplishing other ends.[2] The "student contract approach" is suggested as an effective means of individualized instruction for advanced students of this level. Even if student contracts are used, the course may contain a core of learning or a general session for which all students are responsible.

Individualized instruction is defined as a student-centered program in which students work at their own pace to achieve and master mutually (teacher-student) established goals. It is a highly structured activity because the teacher prepares the avenue or avenues that the student will take in order to help him reach the desired goals. The Language Activity Packets, prepared by the teacher (or by the teacher and student), indicate the desired performance objectives of each unit of study. They also provide the specific steps that will lead the student to mastery of the objectives.

The important features of individualized instruction may be summarized as follows.

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2. Calif. State Dept. of Education, Foreign Language Framework . . . p. 80.

I. What Is Individualized Instruction?

1. Individualized Instruction is a student centered program.

2. Students work at their own pace to achieve the performance goals, required in each Learning Activity Packet, through participating in a wide range of activities and using a variety of materials.

3. The procedures (steps) and means to be employed, and the materials to be used in order to achieve the goals are suggested in the LAP, and also, students are encouraged to use their own resourcefulness and imagination in planning and preparing them.

4. Individualized Instruction prescribes an "open classroom" in which the teacher acts as a resource person, guiding students in their individual pursuits. The students may work individually or/and in groups, helping each other.

5. The "Student Contracts" approach may be effectively employed to individualize instruction, especially for advanced students, providing them with the opportunity to use foreign language skills in pursuit of individual interests. In a class, operated by "Student Contracts" approach, the student is fully responsible for fulfilling the contract's terms.

II. Values of Individualized Instruction -- Specifically Student Contracts

1. The student is able to use foreign language skills in pursuit of his own interests.

2. The student works at his own pace and in his own style.

3. The student is responsible for his own progress and achievement.

4. The student develops ability to evaluate his own progress, and he evaluates himself when he feels he is ready for evaluation.

5. The teacher has more time to work with individual students, acting as a resource person.

6. The student develops confidence, enthusiasm, and excitement in his studies and achievement.

7. Quality of work is stressed rather than quantity.

III. Description of Individualized Instruction in Action -- Gardena High School

1. Classroom setup: Students work in groups. There are several tables in the room. Each group works on the same LAP at the same table, helping each other. A taperecorder with six

headsets are available in the classroom. Books, dictionaries, visual aids are provided on the shelves in the classroom.

2. Teacher Aides (college students) are available in the room, giving assistance, answering questions, preparing and giving exercises, under the guidance of the master teacher.

3. Evaluation: Pre-test and test questions are available at the teacher's desk, and the student contacts the teacher when he feels he is ready to be tested.

IV. Developing Learning Activity Packets

The Learning Activity Packets are prepared, based upon performance objectives, and they provide the student with the specific steps to be taken in order to achieve the objectives.

1. The checklist before writing the LAP includes:

    1. Prepare a course outline.
    2. Estimate an average pace for the completion of the work.
    3. Consider anticipated linguisitic obstacles the student may encounter in completing the objectives.
    4. Discuss with students (and parents) to explain the new approach.

2. The Learning Activity Packet includes:

    1. General objective(s) of the packet.
    2. Performance goals (skills) to be achieved upon completion of the packet.
    3. Available audio-vidual materials for inclusion in the packet.
    4. Procedure (activities) to be followed by the student.
    5. Reinforcement exercises for the student to check his mastery of the objectives.
    6. Evaluation device to check the student's mastery of the packet.

V. An Outline of a Sample LAP, Based on "LAP -- Unit One: Modern Impersonal Style of Written Japanese" prepared by Mr. Marvin Follett

Learning Activity Packet -- Unit I. Modern Impersonal Style of Written Japanese (Han: Modern Japanese, ch. 33)

A. Focus (General Objectives): Reading, writing, comprehension.

B. Objectives (Performance goals):

I. Given a brief article written in modern impersonal style, you will be able to read and demonstrate your comprehension of the article's content by

asking and responding to questions in modern conversational polite style. This will be done at 80% accuracy.

2. Given a choice of days and activities to be reported, you will be able to write a five day diary using the modern impersonal style of written Japanese.

C. Pre-test:

The purpose of the pre-test is to determine how much you already know about the modern impersonal style and your ability to use it properly. Ask your teacher for the pre-test for this unit. Complete the test and have your teacher evaluate it.

D. Learning Activities:

1. Read Modern Japanese, ch. 33 (pp. 332-336)

2. Listen to the tape of Chap. 33. Using the tape for 33-E, drill on answering questions orally. Use only polite conversation style in answering the exercise questions.

3. List from the reading exercise (pp. 332-336) examples of sentence endings using the modern impersonal style, and write the polite conversation equivalent of each. Include at least 3 examples of each type of ending used in this chapter -- verbs, adjectives, and copula. Refer to 33 GA, pp. 338-339 for sample exercise.

4. Write and turn in a five-day diary using the modern impersonal style. Select and indicate one day (1/2 page maximum length) to be submitted as a partial requirement for the test for this unit. This must be grammatically correct at the 95% level of accuracy.

5. Optional activity (recommended for students who plan to continue Japanese studies at the university level). Write the English equivalent for the selection on pp. 332-333.

E. Test: Contact your teacher when you feel you are ready to be tested on each of the following unit requirements.

1. Read orally from pp. 332-336 in the text.

2. Pass a written test on the Kanji from pp. 332-336 at a minimum 80 % level of accuracy.

3. Ask and respond orally to questions -- pp. 332-336. Questions and responses must be grammatically and factually correct at a minimum 80% level of accuracy.

4. Submit a one-day diary written in modern impersonal style. This must be grammatically correct at 95% level of accuracy.

F. Suggested time to complete this unit: 10 days.

G. Problems to be solved

Some of the perceivable problems in the individualized language classroom include the following:

1. The students may be repeating their mistakes without realizing it, i.e. they may be reinforcing their faulty utterances.

2. They may overlook some of the important points of grammer, vocabulary, cultural aspects, etc.

3. They may not have enough models.

4. They may be wasting time.

5. They may not have sufficient opportunities for communication skill drills -- drills to develop skills in using the language spontaneously for communication purpose, including speaking, reading, and writing.